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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAQ

Summary

-- Lead story in all papers today, March 19, highlights under banner headlines reported remarks by the White House spokesperson that "Washington will enter Iraq even if Saddam leaves". Major stories focus on developments related to the war on Iraq, including the Iraqi President's rejection of the U.S. ultimatum.

Editorial Commentary

-- "War against the United Nations"

Daily columnist Rakan Majali writes on the back page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/19): "Some analysts make the point that the major effect of the war will be to put an end to the old world order that has prevailed since the second world war and that brought forth the United Nations and also achieved a status of international equalization particularly between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union.. The U.S. invasion of Iraq will, in effect, mean the end of the United Nations, because, according to the United States, the organization has exhausted its purposes and the world order that existed since the second world war needs to be replaced by a new world order, which has previously been declared by the United States following the collapse of the Soviet Union. What the United States seeks to do today is to move from the declaration phase to the implementation phase of this new world order, thereby reflecting a specific status quo, namely the presence of a single superpower that controls the world's capabilities."

-- "A quiet discussion about the option of stepping down"

Daily columnist Bater Wardam writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/19): "The American-British camp is ready to launch war and there are no positive indications of any move towards finding a solution that protects the Iraqi people from the American aggression any other movement. Bush's ultimatum to the Iraqi President and his family to leave or face war is nothing but a political maneuver to attempt to put the ball in the Iraqi court and hold the Iraqi President responsible for starting the war.. The Iraqi President will not leave and there is nothing in his history or his mentality that would suggest that. Moreover, most countries reject this idea because it opens the door to chaos in international relations. Washington would start building up its forces around every country whose policies it does not approve of and then require changing the regime by the threat of power. This would be utter nonsense."

-- "The imminent Iraqi attack"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (03/19): "The world has not witnessed such a blatant aggression since the days of the Moguls. In the name of eliminating alleged weapons of mass destruction, America is going to use weapons of mass destruction; and on the pretext of implementing Security Council resolutions, America bypasses the Security Council, which does not want war. And on the pretext of protecting Iraq's neighbors, America threatens those same neighbors if they fail to provide facilities for the aggression; and under the pretext of saving the Iraqi people, three thousand bombs will fall on Iraqi cities in the first few hours of the war. The president of the most democratic country in the world allowed himself to deliver a fiery speech asking the president of another sovereign country to abandon his

country within 48 hours. How can this happen in the twenty-first century? Why has America become a country that undermines international law, ignores world public opinion, and wages a destructive war without provocation? U.S. President Bush's address will go down in history along with speeches by Hitler, Stalin and all other dictators who love war and understand nothing but the language of force, threats, invasions and destruction."

-- "The war is not the end"

Daily columnist Tarek Masarweh writes on the back page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (03/19): "In his address, President Bush asked the Iraqi President to leave his country within 48 hours in order to avoid war and is asking the Iraqi army not to fight. The American President is asking the Iraqis to open up their cities and villages to the American occupation army. Is there any worse contempt, not only for the Iraqis, but also for the people of the world? To think that a people might welcome an occupation may apply in a different country, but it cannot happen in a country that fought for eight years, suffered a siege for twelve years and resisted all forms of American operations.. The declaration of war is not the end to the Iraqi issue. It is just the beginning."

GNEHM